

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 8

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MAR 13 2009

Ref: 8EPR-N

Mr. David Wilkinson, Public Outreach
Bridger-Teton National Forest, Jackson Ranger District
PO Box 1689
Jackson, WY 83001

RE: Bridger-Teton National Forest Off-Highway
Vehicle Route Designation Project FEIS
CEQ # 20090022

Dear Mr. Wilkinson,

In accordance with our responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) 42 U.S.C. Section 4231 et. seq., and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act, 42 U.S.C. Section 7609, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 8 (EPA) has reviewed the Bridger-Teton National Forest (BTNF) Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Route Designation Project Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). The proposed action is located in the BTNF which encompasses the Buffalo, Jackson, and Big Piney Ranger Districts in Wyoming. There are 255,830 acres within these districts that currently allow unrestricted summer motorized travel on the BTNF. This project includes five geographic areas of the BTNF; Blackrock/Togwotee, Gros Ventre/Shadow Mountain, Phillips Ridge, Snake River Range/Munger Mountain, and Hoback Basin/Granite Creek.

The purpose of the project is to improve management of public summer motorized use by designating roads and motorized trails in areas of the BTNF where motorized use is currently not restricted. Objectives of the projects are to 1) Designate roads and motorized trails to meet essential public needs, improve the quality of the system, and reduce conflicts, 2) Reduce resource impacts, and 3) Improve the ability to maintain routes and enforce travel regulations.

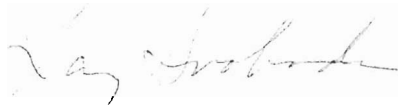
BTNF has designated Alternative D as the initial preferred alternative. This alternative emphasizes retaining primary existing uses, establishing seasonal restrictions to protect wildlife habitat security, particularly during the calving period, and improving the manageability of the OHV system.

EPA agrees that Alternative D will likely result in improved ecosystem health and sustainability, and improved water quality and watershed protections. The elimination of unrestricted motorized travel, seasonal restrictions on routes, and closure of undesignated routes should effectively reduce wildlife and wildlife breeding disturbances, improve security, and

address wildlife fragmentation issues. However, EPA noted in comments on the DEIS that Alternative B clearly results in the strongest environmental and resource protections of all of the Action Alternatives. This alternative will achieve the greatest environmental results to meet the purpose and need of the project but would result in greater impacts to motorized recreational use. In addition to the elimination of all cross country travel on the Forest (which is common to all action alternatives), this alternative includes the least number of motorized routes compared with other action alternatives. EPA's preference for Alternative B was not noted in the FEIS comment responses.

EPA appreciates the opportunity to review this project. The Forest Service has responded to all of the concerns EPA had with the Draft EIS. If you have any questions or would like to discuss our comments, please contact me at (303) 312-6004 or Robin Coursen of my staff at (303)312-6695.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Larry Svoboda", is written over a light gray rectangular background.

Larry Svoboda
Director, NEPA Program
Office of Ecosystems Protection and Remediation